

The REVIEW



Volume XIII, Number 2, February 2004



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FROM THE MODERATOR

The High Price of the Cloak of Respectability

Jeff Bailey

Pastor Jeff Bailey, Grace Baptist Church, Attleboro, MA

Not long ago, my local newspaper featured a story on a new Church that is forming in the community. This Church is by design focused not on doctrine, but on "praise " and "worship", although how Biblical praise and worship transpires without doctrine is not explained in the article. On the same page, the paper was celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of Jonathan Edwards. The juxtaposition of the articles was fascinating to me and illustrated well just how far we have wandered in the practice of our faith.

It is not just fundamental separatists that have noticed the changes; others have also taken note of the drift of evangelicalism. Sociologist Alan Wolfe, the Director of the Bosi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College has just written an interesting book entitled the *Transformation of American Religion : How We Actually Live Our Faith*. Wolfe describes his experiences in traveling to various Churches across the United States and offers insights and analysis based on his observations. He critiques modern Judaism, Catholicism, Mainline Protestantism, and popular Evangelicalism, which he defines as conservative.

In general, Wolfe concedes that there are great differences in theology between these groups, but he feels that what they have in common is far more significant. They have, he believes, confronted the modern culture and the culture has won. He paints a picture of a privatized religion that lacks

confidence and is eager to avoid offense. In speaking of worship, he describes music that is insipid, followed by preaching that lacks depth or any sense of Divine authority. He illustrates this by pointing to the *Prayer of Jabez* by David Wilkerson and calls it "so narcissistic as to make prosperity theology seem demanding by comparison". "Christians and Jews", he says, "...have ignored doctrines, redefined morality, and transferred their obligation to witness into a lifestyle".

Wolfe does not look at any of this as particularly bad, but still acknowledges in a chapter entitled "Sin" that he "is not pleased with this retreat from sin, for the ease with which American religious believers adopt nonjudgmental language and a psychological understanding of wrongdoing is detrimental to anyone, religious or not, who believes that individuals should judge their actions against the highest ideals of human conduct, however those ideals are established. One need not be a Calvinist preoccupied with the dark side of human nature to recognize that covenants exist and that we break them only at great cost to ourselves and to others with whom we share our society." (p. 184). Wolfe notes how market forces have shaped the Church. Indeed it has fundamentally shifted the balance of power between the institution of the Church and the individual.

The October 2003 issue of *Christianity Today* makes this same point in an editorial concerning this book. The editors point out that the reshaping of the suburban landscape has put churches in the position of trying to offer incentives for people to come to them. That process (shifting the balance of power), Wolfe writes, has led the unchurched to understand that they have something that the megachurches want, that is they want their attendance in order to validate their methods. This in turn leads to a spectator and consumer mentality. The unchurched sense that if we believe that we are privileged to have them and if we are not careful

to avoid offending their sensibilities, we will lose them. I believe that this unsaved man has more understanding of the challenges facing us than most of the people our churches.

The challenges facing us as fundamentalists are not a great deal different from those facing megachurch evangelicalism. We can be tempted to minimize doctrine, to de-emphasize Biblical preaching and music that lifts the soul to the very throne of God as opposed to the appeal to the flesh of contemporary Christian music. Our members want to see church growth and too many are willing to sacrifice everything to attain it. Woe unto the pastor that, though he preaches sound doctrine and ministers faithfully, does not achieve the kind of growth rate that our worldly culture demands and expects in its understanding of success.

The fundamental church needs to recognize its susceptibility to these pressures and fight to avoid these errors. We should learn the lessons of the Old Testament, where Israel was most blessed not when they were like the pagan cultures around them, but rather when they were the most distinct in their fidelity to Jehovah. As Wolfe concludes, in seeking to have a voice that is accepted by the culture, the modern evangelical church has become so entrenched in the culture that it finds that it has nothing left to say. In desiring to be relevant, they have lost their soul. May we not fail where they have failed.

IBFNA Regional: Our Baptist Distinctives
Tuesday, May 18, 2004
Grace Baptist Church
Whitehall, PA
Dan Brown, Paul Gustine, Dave Reinhardt

EDITOR'S REPORT

Pragmatism and a Whole Lot More

Dave Reinhardt

Pastor of the Baptist Church of Danbury

We have been outraged by decisions that have insisted that homosexual marriages are legally sanctioned in Massachusetts, that antisodomy laws in Texas are illegal because they discriminate against homosexuals, and that both the people and clergy, even bishops, in the United Episcopal Church can now be homosexuals. Decisions like these have not simply jumped on the scene. They are the fruit of a host of teachings in our society that are contrary to the principles of the Bible. One in particular is pragmatism.

Warren Smith, publisher of the *Charlotte World* (a Christian newspaper), quoted by Joel Belz in *World Magazine*, uses the word to describe the President: "Bush wants to go more conservative than he has—that's his gut and his impulse. But he's also disciplined and pragmatic—that's his training and the result of the infrastructure around him." (February 14/http://www.worldmag.com/world/issue/02-14-04/opening_1.asp). The context of this statement relates to problems some people are having with our President because of government spending, infringements on civil liberty, and the like.

Politics aside, the arrangement of gut and impulse on one side with discipline and pragmatism on the other made me pause. Typically, discipline and truth have been paired in my thinking as attributes more noble than impulse, desire, maybe even gut. The pragmatism is what really struck me. It seems out of place with discipline, an ignoble blending,

almost a light and darkness combination.

But then, the words are describing politics. Survival and some measure of practical success are major components in this field. Charles Sanders Peirce and William James developed a philosophy of pragmatism, which was especially popular in the first part of the twentieth century. *Britannica* zeroes in on the key foci of this philosophy: pragmatism "stresses the priority of action over doctrine, of experience over fixed principles, and it holds that ideas borrow their meanings from their consequences and their truths from their verification" ("Pragmatism" *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=115437>). That pragmatism is diametrically opposed to absolute truth, the Bible, is obvious. Dr. James Deuink in *Balance* (a periodical put out by the Bob Jones University School of Education) points out that pragmatism was a precursor to Joseph Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* and Sidney Simon's *Values Clarification* (<http://www.bjup.com/resources/articles/balance/1903a.html>). Relative concepts and values are of significance as opposed to absolute truth in pragmatism. Reality itself is spoken of as plastic, less than fixed.

The Britannica article goes on to note that pragmatism is a recognized methodology behind judicial matters: "in law, judicial decisions that have turned on the weighing of consequences and probable general welfare rather than on being deduced from precedents have been called pragmatic." No one would deny that pragmatism underlies many of the decisions so troublesome to us as Bible-believing Christians. Indeed, behind pragmatism is the evolutionary framework of a struggle for survival through adaptation or change. In this system, truth is what works, what accomplishes particular objectives. Pragmatism plays a major role in the thinking of people in mainstream America today. What works replaces God's eternal verities and revelation.

Unfortunately this thinking has too often reached into the church. Fundamental, Bible-believing fellowships are backing off from biblical convictions and practices which appear to be self-limiting, not working. Many are breaking down the walls of doctrinal and practical purity that supposedly hurt their outreach, enrollment in their institutions, or impact in their communities. Consistent with today's emphasis on networking, more than a few are forming unequal alliances and joining political coalitions, some even seeking subsidies from the state to accomplish what works, certain concrete, measurable, societal goals. Bible teaching has become a kind of abstraction to them, though they speak of it as still being important, but helping people with their earthly problems right now is what is really substantial. It is the higher good. Obedience becomes for them a relative priority: they have to let go of certain values to stay competitive, to sustain some sort of spiritual market share, even to survive. They regularly identify wholehearted submission to the teachings of Scripture as being impractical or Pharisaical or some new outbreak of Scholasticism.

So our President is pragmatic and disciplined. Maybe he will be more conservative if he has the opportunity to serve a second term. Like many others I am still a little bothered by the fiscal decisions he has made in his first term that are less than conservative. Such is politics. Some say that politics is pragmatism. Okay. But biblical Christianity is not pragmatism.

The same Christian publisher who mentioned the President's pragmatism, Warren Smith, seems to possess the trait himself. He makes the following statements about music in an article entitled "Proceed with prayer and fasting" (<http://www.worldnewspaperpublishing.com/news/FullStory.asp?loc=TCW&ID=820#>).

I love contemporary Christian music. ...As a senior in high school, I hosted a program on "96 Rock,"

the mega-hard-rock radio station in Atlanta. That show, called "Higher Frequency," featured early Phil Keaggy, DeGarmo and Key, Larry Norman, The Resurrection Band and other "Jesus Music" pioneers.

So I've heard all the arguments that fundamentalists make against contemporary Christian music. It's "of the devil." It's "worldly." All the rest.

... Some of it [Christian music] is trite and banal. But that's been true of all music at all times. What makes Christian music "of God" or "of the devil" is not its beat or content, but its excellence or lack thereof.

Really now?

HISTORY

Pastor Jonathan Edwards

1703-1758

1727-1750, Service at Northampton

Materials for the 300th Anniversary of His Birth

Compiled by Paul W. Gustine

Pastor of Bible Baptist Church of Northampton, MA.

Recently two notable conferences were held in Northampton on the life and legacy of Jonathan Edwards. His writings continue to be published by Yale University Press, The Banner of Truth Trust and others. Every generation since his death has had many books seeking to understand and interpret Edwards. Yale University Press has issued a new biography for this anniversary by George M. Marsden.

Another recent biographer, Iain H. Murray, [*Jonathan Edwards, A New Biography* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust)] participated in one of these local conferences. The indented paragraphs below, Edwards' own words, give some insight into his biblical convictions and character.

Farewell Sermon

...It was three and twenty years, the 15th day of last February, since I have laboured in the work of the ministry, in the relation of a pastor to this church and congregation. And though my strength has been weakness, having always laboured under great infirmity of body, besides my insufficiency for so great a charge, in other respects, yet I have not spared my feeble strength, but have exerted it for the good of your souls.... I have spent the prime of my life and strength, in labours for your eternal welfare. You are my witnesses, that what strength I have had I have not neglected in idleness, nor laid out in prosecuting worldly schemes, and managing temporal affairs, for the advancement of my outward estate, and aggrandizing myself and family; but have given myself to the work of the ministry, labouring in it night and day, rising early and applying myself to this great business to which Christ appointed me...

But now I have reason to think, my work is finished which I had to do as your minister: you have publicly rejected me, and my opportunities cease.

The Reason for Edwards' Dismissal.

How highly therefore does it now become us, to consider of that time when we must meet one another before the chief Shepherd? When I must give an account of my stewardship, of the service I have done for, and the reception and treatment I have had among, the people he set me to: and

you must give an account of your own conduct towards me, and the improvement you have made of these three and twenty years of my ministry. ...And then our late grand controversy, concerning the Qualifications necessary for admission to the privileges of members, in complete standing, in the Visible Church of Christ, will be examined and judged, in all its parts and circumstances, and the whole set forth in a clear, certain and perfect light. [Edwards wrote *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God concerning the Qualifications requisite to a Complete Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church*, Boston, 1749. Edwards' cousin, Rev. Solomon Williams, Lebanon, CT, answered with *The True State of the Question concerning the Qualifications necessary to Lawful Communion in the Christian Sacraments*. Edwards replied to Williams in *Misrepresentations Corrected, and Truth Vindicated*, Boston, 1752.] [Edwards was contending for regenerate church membership.]

Edwards' Message for Everyone in the Community

I. To those who are professors of godliness among us.

...I intreat you to remember and consider the rules which I have often laid down to you, during my ministry, with a solemn regard to the future day, when you and I must meet together before our Judge....

II. Now I am taking my leave of this people, I would apply myself to such among them as I leave in a christless, graceless condition; and would call on such, seriously to consider that solemn day, when they and I must meet before the Judge of the world.

...I have sought out acceptable words, that if possible, I might prevail upon you to forsake sin, and

turn to God, and accept of Christ as your Saviour and Lord.... May God in mercy grant, that however all past means have been unsuccessful, you may have future means, which may have a new effect....

III. I would address myself to those who are under some awakenings.

...Whoever may hereafter stand related to you, as your spiritual guide, my desire and prayer is, that the great Shepherd of the sheep would have a special respect to you, and be your guide, (for there is none teacheth like him,) and that he who is the infinite Fountain of light, would *open your eyes, and turn you from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, through faith that is in Christ....*

IV. I would apply myself to the young people of the congregation.

...And it has ever appeared to me a peculiarly amiable thing to see young people walking in the ways of virtue and Christian piety, having their hearts purified and sweetened with a principle of divine love. ...I have sought the good and not the hurt of our young people. I have desired their truest honour and happiness, and not their reproach; knowing that true virtue and religion tended, not only to the glory and felicity of young people in another world, but their greatest peace and prosperity, and highest dignity and honour in this world, and above all things to sweeten and render pleasant and delightful even the days of youth....

V. I would apply myself to the children of the congregation, the lambs of this flock, who have been so long under my care.

...Dear children, I leave you in an evil world, that is full of snares and temptations. God only knows what will become of you. This the Scripture has told us, that there are but few saved: and we have abundant confirmation of it from what we see. This we see, that children die as well as others: multitudes die before they grow up; and of those that grow up, comparatively few ever give good evidence of saving conversion to God. I pray God to pity you, and take care of you, and provide for you the best means for the good of your souls; and that God himself would undertake for you, to be your heavenly Father, and the mighty Redeemer of your immortal souls....

Concluding Remarks

1. One thing that greatly concerns you, as you would be a happy people, is the maintaining of *family order*.
2. As you would seek the future prosperity of this society, it is of vast importance that you should avoid *contention*.
3. Another thing, that vastly concerns the future prosperity of the town, is, that you should watch against the encroachments of Error; and particularly *Arminianism*, and doctrines of like tendency. [For Edwards Calvinism was orthodoxy.]
4. Another thing which I would advise to, that you may hereafter be a prosperous people, is, that you would give yourselves much to prayer.
5. The last article of advice, I would give, (which doubtless does greatly concern your prosperity,) is, that you would take great care with regard to the settlement of a minister, to see to it who or what manner of person he is, whom you settle: and particularly in these two respects.
(1.) That he be a man of thoroughly sound prin-

ciples, in the scheme of doctrine which he maintains.

(2.) Labour to obtain a man, who has an established character, as a person of serious religion and fervent piety.

...If you should happen to settle a minister, who knows nothing, truly, of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, nothing experimentally of the nature of vital religion; alas, how will you be exposed as sheep without a shepherd....

One religious leader, the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* reported (October 3, 2003, page 7), "is leery of a tendency by Edwards followers to divide people into the categories of 'saved' and 'unsaved.'" Jesus said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

In whose word will you entrust your immortal soul?

All the above quotations are from the following source.

Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson. *Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections, With Introduction, Bibliography, and Notes*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1962, pp. 186-202.

PERSPECTIVES

Who Left Whom? Who Joined Whom?

- Ralph G. Colas

Executive Secretary of the The Amerian Council of Christian Churches and The World Council of Biblical Churches (625 E. 4th Street, PO Box 5455, Bethlehem, PA, 18015- 610-865-3009, and 610-865-3033 for faxes).

More than 2600 "conservative" Episcopalians gathered recently in Dallas, TX. Their purpose was to repudiate their denomination's confirmation of an openly gay man as bishop. The group that met in Dallas also sent a plea to the Anglican leaders worldwide, to "realign" Anglicanism in North America toward traditional scriptural teachings and doctrines.

The leaders of the American Anglican Council stopped short of saying they are "splitting" from the 2.3-million member Episcopal Church. They did warn that they would stop giving money to the Episcopal Church in favor of "biblically orthodox mission and ministry."

The council's president, Rev. Canon David C. Anderson, said, "People are worried that we are leaving the Episcopal Church and that we want a parallel province, but we are not leaving. They left us."

Another leader of this unhappy group is Diane Knippers, president of the Institute of Religion and Democracy, who said that Episcopal leaders are out of touch with people in the pews. "The Episcopal elite leaders went to elite schools, and they listen to National Public Radio, they do not watch Fox News."

Knippers added, "People lump all the mainline denominations together, but the Episcopal Church is an upper-middle class WASP church, much more urban than other mainline denominations, and therefore much more vulnerable to the kind of values of American cultural elites."

Diane Knippers, who is herself a member of the liberal Episcopal Church, was in Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa in 1998, to cover the World Council of Churches (WCC) as it met to celebrate its 50th anniversary. She was sitting behind me at a press conference and asked what the Fundamental News Service (our press name) was, and what was different

between our group and her Institute of Religion and Democracy. My response to her was that her group was "trying to clean up the WCC" and we had come out of that liberal body. I then told her that God gave us two precepts that dealt with the leaven of unbelief. First we were to "purge out" and if that could not be done we were to "come out."

In March, 2003, as I was covering the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals in Minnesota. I noted Diane was there and I learned that she was serving as the secretary of the NAE Board of Directors. Then it was announced to those present at the NAE Convention, Dr. Robert Schuller would be speaking at NAE's next convention held in 2004.

At the 62nd Annual Convention of the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) a resolution was unanimously adopted that spoke to the issue of Dr. Schuller coming to the NAE.

Some pertinent parts of that resolution are as follows:

"Dr. Robert Schuller is the pastor of Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, CA. He is the number one TV preacher who is watched on hundreds of stations in more than 180 countries with an audience of over 20 million. He will be a speaker at the 62nd annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in Colorado Springs, CO in March of 2004."

"This most interesting development demonstrates the inclusive policy of the NAE. Over the years they have reached out to many speakers for their program, but next years is different. Robert Schuller is a false prophet; a wolf in sheep's clothing! His erroneous definition of sin as 'anything that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem,' has led him to deny and distort the Gospel of

grace. Man's greatest need is not self-esteem, but regeneration. Our Lord said, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves' [Matthew 7:15]. Robert Schuller's 'Possibility Thinking' is no different that Norman Vincent Peale's 'Positive Thinking'—both are error! Both men should be identified as false prophets."

"The ACCC remains steadfast in our commitment to the Bible's teaching of man's total depravity and for his need of God's grace in salvation. We believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone and in Christ alone! We further reaffirm our commitment to Biblical separation from the apostasy [Robert Schuller], and from those who compromise with the apostasy [the NAE]. We remind true Bible-believing Christians of the danger of the National Association of Evangelicals, especially with this latest compromise of inviting a false prophet to come into their annual meeting as a speaker."

The NAE elects Diane Knippers as its secretary, while she remains in the Episcopal Church, a vital part of both the National and World Councils of Churches. And then this compromising church body [the NAE], organized in 1942, invites a speaker to their platform in the person of Dr. Robert Schuller, a rank apostate. At the same time they permit those from both the NCC and WCC to not only hold membership in the NAE, but even choosing them to serve in a role of leadership. This reveals the fact that when you begin to compromise, and reject the clarion call for Biblical separation, you can only slide downward and farther away from the Truth.

May God enable us in the IBFNA to continue to "Hold fast the faithful Word."

IN MEMORIAM

Irwin Rehn

On February 10 Irwin Rehn, age 81, went to be with the Lord. Brother Rehn was one of the many laymen who supported the IBFNA in its early days. He was a member and deacon of Parsippany Baptist Church, New Jersey for many years. How faithful he was to his church and Pastor. In addition to his many responsibilities, he managed the television ministry for the church. He loved and attended most of the IBFNA conferences and was a charter member at the Philadelphia Meeting.

Irwin was an engineer specializing in radiation. In fact he was one of the unique people in the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb during World War II. As a young engineer, he was one of the official observers when the first explosion took place in New Mexico in July, 1945. His team studied the effects of the explosion on the atmosphere. He had been working at the secret atomic energy facility at Richland, Washington.

His many friends as well as his wonderful family will miss him.. A few years ago he and his dear wife, Arline, retired to Alabama to be with their family. Recently, he had written to me that he regretted that he could no longer keep up his membership in the IBFNA. He was the kind of Christian leader on which you could build a church! May his tribe increase.

L. Duane Brown, former Pastor, Parsippany Baptist Church

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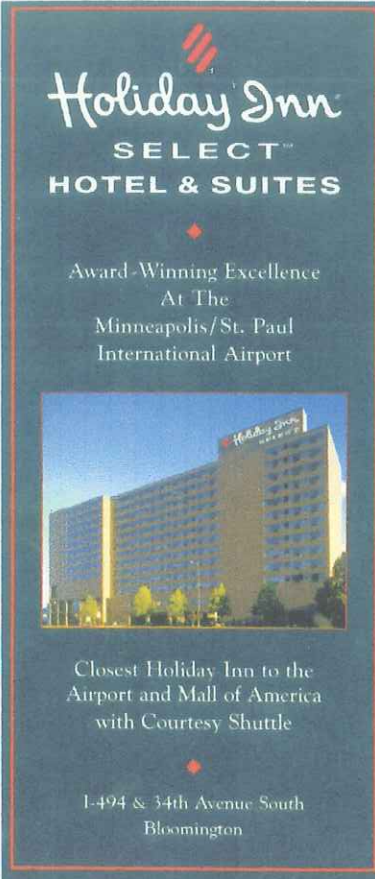
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MN. Zoo (5 MI/ 8.05 KM)
Southdale and Galleria Shopping Malls (7 MI/ 11.27 KM)
Metrodome - Home of the Minnesota Twins & Vikings (9 MI/ 14.48 KM)
Minneapolis Covention Center / Dwtn Minneapolis (9 MI/ 14.48 KM)
Target Center - Home of the Minnesota Timberwolves (9 MI/ 14.48 KM)
River Center Convention Center / Dwtn St. Paul (9 MI/ 14.48 KM)
Science Museum of Minnesota (9 MI/ 14.48 KM)
State Capital (9 MI/ 14.48 KM) XCEL
Energy Center - Home of the Minnesota Wild (9 MI/ 14.48 KM)